DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 576 CS 510 552

AUTHOR Honeyghan, Glasceta
TITLE PoetryRama: Exploring Drama through Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes.
PUB DATE 2000-06-00
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Florida Reading Quarterly; v36 n4 p15-20 Jun 2000
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Choral Speaking; Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; *Drama; Early Childhood Education; *Nursery Rhymes; *Poetry

ABSTRACT

Drama through Mother Goose nursery rhymes can be integrated in the pre-K-3 curriculum. Activities can range from spontaneous gestures and facial expression, to guided performance where a teacher might have specific objectives in mind and rehearse a rhyme for formal performance. Activities include unison or choral speaking; "line-a-child" arrangement; refrain arrangement; and antiphonal or sound group arrangement. Many nursery rhymes can be read and dramatized for a few minutes during a regular class session with minimal coaching. These activities can make a significant contribution to children's expressive abilities. (Contains 21 references and numerous excerpts of nursery rhymes.) (RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 451 576

PoetryRama: Exploring Drama through Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes.

by Glasceta Honeyghan

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
K. L. Laframboise
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CS 510 552

PoetryRama: Exploring Drama through Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes

Glasceta Honeyghan

Drama activities make a significant contribution to children's learning of literacy.

It is widely accepted that the use of drama in the classroom provides meaningful connectedness to literature and increases students' sensitivity and responses to language and literature (Cornett, 1999; Grant Hennings, 1997; Hancock, 2000; Hill, 1990b; McCasin, 1990; Norton, 1999). Dramatization allows children to explore body movements, develop their senses, expand their imagination and language, and experiment with characterization, to move out of an egocentric perspective into an empathetic one (Hillman, 1999). Drama fosters deeper understanding of story structures and narrative competence (Martinez, 1993). Drama can make information in content areas more meaningful (Fennessey, 1995; Hancock, 2000; May, 1998; Putnam, 1991; Young and Vardell, 1993). Cornett (1999) outlines twelve reasons teachers should integrate creative drama in the curriculum:

1. Drama is part of real life and prepares students to deal with life's problems.
2. Drama engages students in creative problem solving and decision making.
3. Drama develops verbal and nonverbal communication
4. Drama can enhance students' psychological well-being.
5. Drama develops empathy and new perspectives.
6. Drama builds cooperation and develops social skills.
7. Drama increases concentration and comprehension through engagement.
8. Drama helps students consider moral issues and develop values.
9. Drama is an alternative way to assess by observing, i.e, externalization.
10. Drama is entertaining.
11. Drama contributes to aesthetic development.
12. Drama offers learning avenue that enhances other areas in the curriculum.

Drama can be an enjoyable activity for students of all grade levels, from kindergarten to high school (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson, 1999). Action and drama also accommodates multiple learning styles, particularly children whose learning styles thrive on active immersion. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999) strongly recommend creative drama for use with children of all ages and abilities. McCaslin (1990) specifically recommends creative drama activities for students with learning problems. One research by Miller, Rynders, & Schlein (1993) supports their view that drama can be a tool to increase interaction among students with and without mental handicaps in a study comparing fifth graders who either were involved in drama or noncompetitive games. Another research by Dupont (1992) presents similar results that fifth grade remedial readers who were taught to use drama as a learning strategy consistently scored higher on the Metropolitan Reading Comprehension Test and outperformed a control group who did vocabulary lessons and discussed the stories. Drama is also standard recommended practice in ESL classrooms (Au, 1993; Freeman & Freeman, 1992). Dramatic performance provides opportunities to perform, which is a key to improving and developing communicative competence in a second language. "Drama allows second language learners the opportunity to try out the gestures, intonation patterns, and key words of a new language" (Reutzel and Cooter, 1999, p. 373).

In spite of the effectiveness of drama and play in the classroom, the recent emphasis on academic curriculum—the skill orientation movement and standardized tests—where teachers are teaching towards testing, leaves little time for creative expressions.

This article looks at how drama through Mother Goose Nursery rhymes can be integrated in the pre-K–3 Curriculum. Activities can range from spontaneous, that is, unrehearsed with minimal props, to guided performance where a teacher might have specific objectives in mind and engage in more elaborate planning to be performed more formally.

Mother Goose Rhymes and Drama

Dramatization is one way to enhance children's enjoyment of the situations found in poetry and nursery rhymes (Grant Hennings, 1999; Hancock, 2000; McCauley & McCauley, 1992). Poetry, which includes Mother Goose rhymes, not only provides a natural means of stimulating language development and listening appreciation in very young children, but also elicits a range of responses, which include actions and drama. The rhyme and repetition of sounds is pleasant, pleasing to the ear, but because passive listening may not encourage language development, teachers need to create experiences that motivate children to interact with verses in enjoyable ways.

Many nursery rhymes lend themselves to dramatic possibilities for they (a) use dialogue arrangement and are written in dramatic voice, (b) their meaning is evident, (3) the use of punctuation and distinct line endings are easy to translate vocally, and (4) they do not contain transitions and descriptive passages of usual scripts.

Teachers who might be reluctant to use drama because of intense preparation might find it easier to perform improvisational dramatics based upon Mother Goose rhymes, u ng simple props such as hats, shawls, jackets, and cha s. The teacher can copy the nursery rhyme on an ove head or chart paper for easy viewing and identify the lin s for single voices, two voices, or multiple voices.

Likewise, teachers who are reluctant to use more difficult poems in dramatization might find it easy to use Mother Goose rhymes since these rhymes have been part of our tradition and part of nearly every child's early experience. One of the values of poetry for children is encouragement to identify with characters and situations. It might be worthy to note that several of our Mother Goose rhymes are based upon lives of real people and provide descriptions of daily actions. For instance, "Hey diddle diddle/the cat and the fiddle" is based on the cat being Queen Elizabeth 1—1561. The queen liked to dance, and she played with her ministers as if they were mice.

Teachers can involve the entire class in dramatizing a piece. Even young children who cannot read formally can join in, since many children know these rhymes from memory, or they can take part in repeated lines. Especially with children in the lower grades, many selections are short, probably as few as four lines such as in this nursery rhyme:

PUSSY-CAT AND QUEEN

"Pussy-cat, pussy cat, where have you been?
"I've been to London to look at the Queen."
"Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, what did you there?"
"I frightened a little mouse under the chair."

There are two voices talking, alternating lines. "Pussy-cat" in the first line is clearly identified as the one being addressed, and the use of quotation marks helps us to recognize each speaker and helps us to read the rhyme easily. In the second line Pussy-Cat responds; then the first speaker responds in the third line. Finally, Pussy-Cat responds in the fourth line. Here is a rhyme that introduces (a) names or phrases that tell readers who or what is speaking, (b) a way to help children imagine their own conversation with "Pussy-Cat," and (c) a way to encourage children to begin to identify with characters and situations or scenes and opposing or complementary roles. Acting out these scenes can also help children appreciate characters and language found in these traditional nursery rhymes. This acting out may be displayed through unison or choral reading, line-by-line, refrain, or antiphonal arrangement.

Unison or Choral

Choral speaking consists of interpreting and saying a poem together as a group activity, where all children participate at the same time. Choral speaking helps to build fluency, a smooth flow, and easy pronunciation as children practice reading, listening, and speaking (Piazza, 1999). An important advantage of choral arrangement is that for children, the safety of numbers can create a risk-free setting. Because younger children have trouble coordinating their voices, teachers in kindergarten and first grades might want to begin by leading the entire class in reading the pieces such as "One, Two, Three" and "Little Tom Tucker" where the dialogue is not obvious and where the quotation marks are not evident, but clues are identified. Dramatization can be introduced through minimal gestures, body movements, or finger plays.

ONE, TWO, THREE

One, two, three, four, five
once I caught a fish alive.
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,
But I let it go again.
Why did you let it go?
Because it bit my finger so.
Which finger did it bite?
The little one upon the right.

LITTLE TOM TUCKER

Little Tom Tucker
Sings for his supper.
What shall he eat?
White bread and butter.
How will he cut it
Without e'er a knife?
How shall he marry
Without e'er a wife?

Line-a Child or line-a-Group Arrangement

Many nursery rhymes--with short lines and distinct line endings--lend themselves to line-a-child chorusing. As children get more familiar with reading or listening scripts, they can move on to line-a-child or line-a-group arrangement, where individual children attain ownership of a single line, or small groups can take turns to speak a line or two of poetry, where one group or child reads a line, another group or child reads

the next line and so on until the poem is finished. The following are samples of other nursery rhymes that use dialogue arrangement to encourage children to act out, do role-playing, become introduced to concept of plot, and to expand their interpretative skills.

SHALL WE GO A-SHEARING

Child 1 or group 1: "Old woman, old woman, shall we go a shearing?"
Child 2 or group 2: "Speak a little louder, sir, I am very thick of hearing."
Child 1 or group 1: "Old woman, old woman, shall I kiss you dearly?"
Child 2 or group 2: "Thank you, kind sir, I hear you very clearly."

THE COCK AND THE HEN

Child1 or group1: "Cock, cock, cock, cock, I've laid an egg,
Am I gang ba—re-foot?"
Child 2 or Group 2: "Hen, hen, hen, hen,
I've been up and down
To every shop in town,
And cannot find a shoe
To fit your foot,
If I'd crow my hea—art out."

Teachers might want to substitute "old woman" and "old man" or "cock and "hen" for cast members, instead of "child 1 or group 1," or in the case of "Billy, Billy," and "Where are you going my pretty maid," teachers might find these nursery rhymes appropriate to alternate between boys and girls—"Billy and Polly" or "Maid and Sir."

BILLY, BILLY

Child 1 or group 1: "Billy, Billy, come and play,
While the sun shines bright as day."
Child 2 or group 2: "Yes, my Polly so I will,
For I love to please you still."
Child 1 or group 1: "Billy, Billy, have you seen
Sam and Betsy on the green?"
Child 2 or group 2: "Yes, my Poll, I saw them pass,
Skipping o'er the new-mown grass."
Child 1 or group 1: "Billy, Billy, come along,
And I will sing a pretty song."

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MY PRETTY MAID

Child 1 or group 1: "Where are you going, my pretty maid?"
Child 2 or group 2: "I'm going a milking, sir," she said.
Child 1 or group 1: "May I go with you, my pretty maid?"
Child 2 or group 2: "You're kindly welcome sir," she said.
Child 1 or group 1: "What is your father, my pretty maid?"
Child 2 or group 2: "My father's a farmer, sir," she said.
Child 1 or group 1: "What is your fortune, my pretty maid?"
Child 2 or group 2: "My face is my fortune, sir," she said.
Child 1 or group 1: "Then I can't marry you, my pretty maid."
Child 2 or group 2: "Nobody asked you, sir," she said.

Other enjoyable Mother Goose rhymes, such as "Lock and Key" and "Just Like Me" suggest fun and some humor through puns and word play. Where children might be reluctant to repeat the last line, the teacher can play that part.

LOCK AND KEY

Child 1 or group 1: "I am a gold lock."
Child 2 or group 2: "I am a gold key."
Child 1 or group 1: "I am a silver lock."
Child 2 or group 2: "I am a silver key."
Child 1 or group 1: "I am a brass lock."
Child 2 or group 2: "I am a brass key."
Child 1 or group 1: "I am a lead lock."
Child 2 or group 2 "I am a lead key."
Child 1 or group 1: "I am a don lock."
Child 2 or group 2: "I am a don key."

Other Mother Goose rhymes are appropriate for three or more characters or groups:

BOY AND GIRL

Child 1 or group 1: There was a little boy and a little girl
Lived in an alley;
Says the little boy to the little girl,
Child 2 or group 2: "Shall I, oh, shall I?"
Child 1 or group 1: Says the little girl to the little boy,
Child 3 or group 3: What shall we do?"
Child 1 or group 1: Says the little boy to the little girl,
Child 2 or group 2: "I will kiss you."

A JOLLY OLD PIG

Child 1 or group 1: A jolly old pig once lived in a sty,
And three little piggies she had,
And she waddled about saying,
Child 2 or group 2: "Grumph! Grumph! Grumph!"
Child 1 or group 1: While the little ones said,
Child 3 or group 3: "Wee! Wee!"
Child 1 or group 1: And she waddled about saying,
Child 2 or group 2: "Grumph! Grumph! Grumph!"
Child 1 or group 1: While the little ones said,
Child 3 or group 3 "Wee! Wee!

Refrain Arrangement

Longer nursery rhymes with a short repetitive refrain lend themselves easily to drama. In refrain arrangement, an adult or a child recites the body of a poem, and the other children respond in unison, repeating the refrain or chorus, which is repeated after each stanza. Then the whole class joins in on the refrain, which is repeated after each stanza.

Even for non- or struggling readers, refrains can be a source of happiness, since refrains (a) are easy to memorize, (a) result in rapid participation from each group member and (c) the repeated readings encourage fluency which usually results in less intimidation and a willingness to participate.

"A Jolly Old Pig" mentioned earlier encourages the refrain format. "The Death and Burial of Poor Cock Robin" is a sophisticated piece that is also appropriate for the refrain format to use even with older children. It contains sufficient dialogue to make reading a challenge and can involve several students or characters. The narrator or leader, who might be the teacher or a child recites the initial lines of each stanza and individual children or groups respond by repeating the remaining lines.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF POOR COCK ROBIN

Leader: Who killed Cock Robin?
Child 1 or group 1: "I,"
Leader: said the sparrow,
Child 1 or group 1: "With my bow and arrow.
I killed Cock Robin."
Entire Group: *Refrain*
All the birds of the air
Fell sighing and sobbing,
When they heard of the death
of poor Cock Robin
When they heard of the death
of Poor Cock Robin.
Leader: Who saw him die?
Child 2 or group 2: "I,"
Leader: said the fly,
Child 2 or group 2: "with my little eye
I saw him die."
Entire group: Refrain
Leader: Who caught his blood?
Child 3 or group 3: "I,"
Leader: said the fish,
Child 3 or group 3: "With my little dish,
I caught his blood."
Entire Group: Refrain
Leader: Who'll make his shroud?
Child 4 or group 4: "I,"
Leader: said the beetle,
Child 4 or group 4: "With my thread and needle,
I'll make his shroud."
Entire Group: Refrain
Leader: Who'll carry the torch?
Child 5 or group 5: "I,"
Leader: said the linnet,
Child 5 or group 5: "I'll come in a minute,
I'll carry the torch."
Entire group: Refrain
Leader: Who'll be the clerk?
Child 6 or group 6: "I,"
Leader: said the lark,
Child 6 or group 6: "If it's not in the dark,
I'll be the clerk."
Entire group: Refrain
Leader: Who'll dig his grave?
Child 7 or group 7: "I,"
Leader: said the owl,
Child 7 or group 7: "With my spade and trowel,
I'll dig his grave."
Entire group: Refrain
Leader: "Who'll be the parson?
Child 8 or group 8: "I,"
Leader: said the rook
Child 8 or group 8: "With my little book,
I'll be the parson."
Entire group: Refrain
Leader: Who'll be chief mourner?
Child 9 or group 9: "I,"
Leader: said the dove,
Child 9 or group 9: "I mourn for my love,
I'll be chief mourner."
Entire group: Refrain
Leader: Who'll sing a psalm?
Child 10 or group 10: "I,"
Leader: said the thrush,
Child 10 or group 10: "As I sit in a bush,

	I'll sing a psalm."
Entire group:	Refrain
Leader:	Who'll carry the coffin?
Child 11 or group 11:	"I,"
Leader:	said the kite
Child 11 or group 11:	"If it's not in the night, I'll carry the coffin."
Entire group:	Refrain
Leader:	Who'll toll the bell?
Child 12 or group 12:	"I,"
Leader:	said the bull
Child 12 or group 12:	"Because I can pull, I'll toll the bell."
Entire Group:	Refrain:

Antiphonal or Sound Group Arrangement

Fran Tanner (1979) recommends that older children experiment with the effects of grouping their voices according to resonance, with light, medium, and dark voices. Teachers can divide the class into contrasting groups to speak sections of the nursery rhyme according to appropriate meaning or mood. "A Jolly Old Pig" and "Shall We Go A-shearing" are good examples for this arrangement. Other Mother Goose rhymes with the question and answer format are also good choices for antiphonal arrangement. Boys may also be balanced against girls.

THE BELLS

Child 1 or group 1:	"You owe me five shillings,"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of St' Helen's.
Child 3 or group 3:	"When will you pay me?"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of Old Baily.
Child 4 or group 4:	"When I grow rich."
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of Shoreditch.
Child 5 or group 5:	"When will that be?"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of Stepney.
Child 6 or group 6:	"I don't know."
Child 2 or group 2:	Says the great Bell of Bow.
Child 7 or group 7:	"Two sticks in an apple,"
Child 2 or group 2:	Ring the bells of Whitechapel.
Child 8 or group 8:	"Halfpence and farthings,"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of St. Martin's.
Child 9 or group 9:	"Kettles and pans,"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of St. Ann's.
Child 10 or group 10:	"Brickbats and tiles,"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of St. Giles.
Child 11 orgroup 11:	"Old shoes and slippers,"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of St. Peter's.
Child 12 or group 12:	"Pokers and tongs,"
Child 2 or group 2:	Say the bells of St John's.

Suggestions for teaching

Many nursery rhymes can be read and dramatized for a few minutes during a regular class session with minimal coaching and preparation; others, after rehearsal, can be performed before an audience such as the class next door, the principal, or a visiting parent. Teachers can bear the following points in mind:

1. Prepare for dramatic oral reading by modeling for the students ways to use the voice to express thoughts, feelings, and moods. Teachers read the nursery rhyme as children follow along on a chart or on their individual copies.

2. Establish a sense of audience, perhaps dividing the class in half, having one half perform while the other half views and responds. Establish rules for a good audience, such as listening attentively, respectfully, and responsively.

3. Nursery rhymes should be read and discussed. Arrangement should be decided upon, whether line-, refrain-, or antiphonal would be most appropriate for a selection.

4. When first introducing drama, invite children volunteers as narrators and characters, allowing them perhaps to write choices on slips of paper. If there is a role that no child likes to play, teachers can play it themselves. Children might need to have rehearsals as they prepare for the final reading or performance.

5. Children can practice voice variation such as young or old, near or faraway, mean or kind to meanings being communicated. "A Jolly Old Pig" and "Shall We Go A-shearing" are two pieces that could lend themselves to voice variation.

6. In lower grades, nursery rhymes can be printed on a chart. In the upper grades, children can obtain individual copies so that they can concentrate on the use of voice and gestures and do not have to worry about forgetting lines.

7. Let children help select and interpret the nursery rhymes and improvise scenes. Minimal props can be used such as stick puppets, hats, or chairs. For many of these nursery rhymes, teachers can recommend that children add body chants and finger plays. The teacher might have children share in identifying actions that fit the meaning. For most nursery rhymes, younger children can merely pretend to be each character in the rhyme and perform the actions expressed in the verses, doing finger play to "One, Two, Three," clapping to the rhythm of "Little Tom Tucker," balancing voices in "A Jolly

Old Pig." Older children can enjoy the visual imagery that a nursery rhyme such as "The Death and Burial of Poor Cock Robin" creates. The rhyme tells a story—a death that could befall a person or an animal—and the actions of the other birds are easy to visualize. They can imagine the scene taking place in a forest and reenact each bird's predicament. Sound may also enhance performance, since so many nursery rhymes can be sung to tunes.

8. For assessment, teachers might want to consider the following:

    - Drama is child-centered rather than criterion-referenced.
    - It is an ongoing process through observation by teacher.
    - Teachers and students should be involved in evaluation.
    - Teachers can develop their own rubric and questionnaire.

Conclusion

Drama is one of the most meaningful activities in which students of any age and ability can engage. Drama activities are useful for enhancing students' comprehension of, personal response to, and appreciation for literature, and at the same time can be supportive of other areas in the curriculum. Poetry, including Mother Goose nursery rhymes, can be a source of inspiration for drama, and activities can consist of informal dramatics where children use simple gestures, facial expressions, and simple props such as stools and chairs. Teachers will find that dramatizing nursery rhymes can be particularly useful because many rhymes are already known and loved by children, and drama activities are capitalizing on play—an activity that children naturally enjoy. These activities can make a significant contribution to children's expressive abilities.

References

Au, K.H. (1993). *Literacy instruction in multicultural settings*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovitch.

Cornett, C.E. (1999). *The arts as meaning makers*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill-Prentice Hall.

Dupont, S. (1992). The effectiveness of creative drama as an instrumental strategy to enhance reading comprehension skill of fifth-grade remedial readers. *Reading Research Quarterly, 31*(3), 41-52.

Fennessey, S. (1995). Living history through drama and literature. *The Reading Teacher, 49* (1), 16-19.

Freeman, Y.S., & Freeman, D.E. (1992). *Whole language for second language learners*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Grant Hennings, D. (1999). *Communication in Action: Teaching the Language Arts*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Hancock, M.R. (2000). *A celebration of literature and response: Children, books, and teachers in K-8 classrooms*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill-Prentice Hall.

Hill, S. (1990b). *Readers theater: Performing the text*. Armdale, Victoria, Australia: Eleanor Curtain.

Hillman, J. (1999). *Discovering children's literature*. Columbus, Ohio: Merril-Prentice Hall.

Lynch-Brown, C., & Tomlinson, C.M. (1999). *Essentials of children's literature*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Martinez, M. (1993). Motivating dramatic story reenactments. *The Reading Teacher, 46*(8), 682-688.

May, F.B. (1998). *Reading as communication to help children read and write*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill-Prentice Hall.

McCasin, N. (1990). *Creative drama in the classroom*. New York: Longman.

McCauley, J.K., & McCauley, D.S. (1992). Using choral reading to promote language learning for ESL students. *The Reading Teacher, 45* (7), 526-533.

Miller, H., Rynders, J, & Schleien, S.(1993). Drama: A medium to enhance social interaction between students with and without mental retardation. *Mental Retardation, 31*(4), 228-33.

Moore, B., & Caldwell, H. (1993). Drama and drawing for narrative writing in primary grades. *Journal of Educational Research, 8*(2), 100-110.

Norton, Donna (1999). *Through the eyes of a child*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.

Piazza, C. L. (1999). *Multiple forms of literacy*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill

Putnam, L. (1991). Dramatizing nonfiction with emerging readers. *Language Arts, 68* (6), 463-469.

Ray Ruetzel, D. & Cooter, Jr. R.B. (1999). *Teaching children to read: From basals to books*. Columbus, Ohio: Prentice Hall.

Young, T.A., & Vardell, S. (1993). Weaving readers theatre and nonfiction into the curriculum. *The Reading Teacher, 46* (5), 396-406.

Glasceta Honeyglan is Coordinator of Literacy Instruction in the Division of Education at Florida Memorial College in Miami. E-mail: honeyg@fmc.edu